

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Evaluating Website Validity*

Do you believe everything someone tells you? I hope not. Then why should you believe everything someone tells you on the Internet?

Believe it or not, there are many people who put out false web pages on the Internet. These web pages look “real,” but actually provide false or biased information. Because not every website is reliable, it is important to know how to distinguish between valid and invalid websites.

**Objective:** Find one valid and one invalid website on the same topic.

**Directions:** Decide upon a research-worthy subject for an Internet search (for example: smoking bans, World War II, liposuction, etc.). Using a search engine such as Google, Ask Jeeves, or AltaVista, locate two websites based on your topic – one valid and one invalid. You will use these two website and the information provided about website validity to write a comparison/contrast paper using your two websites as the sources.

### **The Essay:**

- 2-3 pages in length
- Purpose: to show the differences between a valid website and an invalid website.
- Use one of the comparison/contrast formulas we discussed when writing compare/contrast paragraphs.
- Thesis: While (valid website) passes all nine of the validity tests, (invalid website) is invalid because (summarize main points you will make).
- Paragraphs should be grouped according the nine tests of validity, arranged in a manner that makes senses to you.

Use the website criteria below to judge each website. If a website fails to meet any of the nine criterion in a satisfactory manner, it is an invalid website. Take notes on each site.

---

### **1. PURPOSE**

What is the purpose of the site or page? (Circle one)

- Commercial (selling products)
- Informative
- Educational
- Entertaining
- Personal
- Institutional
- Persuasive

## 2. URL

What does the URL say about the site or page?

- **.gov** • Government agency: [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)
- **.net** • Internet Service Provider: [www.whitehouse.net](http://www.whitehouse.net)
- **.com** • Commercial site (Note: [www.whitehouse.com](http://www.whitehouse.com) is a pornographic site. Go there at your own risk.)
- **.edu** • Higher education - [www.lesley.edu](http://www.lesley.edu). Other educational sites may appear with different domain names: [www.whitehouse.gov/kids](http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids)
- **.mil** • Military site- [www.navy.mil/](http://www.navy.mil/)
- **~** • ("tilde") Personal site - [www.ddc.com/~kjohnson/birdcare.htm](http://www.ddc.com/~kjohnson/birdcare.htm)
- **.org** • Organization; may be charitable, religious, or a lobbying group - <http://www.rtda.org>.
- Country names appear as a two-letter abbreviation in the domain name. For a complete list, go to [Domain Name Registries around the World](#).
- New domain names include .museum, .info and .biz, among others. Read more about them at [InterNic FAQ on Domain Names](#).

## 3. AUTHORITY

- Who is the author?
- What are his/her credentials?
- Does s/he have sufficient authority to speak on the subject?
- Is there any way to reach him/her?
- Is there an organizational or corporate sponsor?
- Is this page authentic, or is it a hoax?
- Is there a reference list?

## 4. OBJECTIVITY

- Does the content reflect a bias?
- Is the bias explicit or hidden?
- Does the identity of the author or sponsor suggest a bias?
- How does the bias impact the usefulness of the information?

## **5. APPROPRIATENESS OR RELEVANCE**

- Is the content accurate, complete, well written?
- Is the content relevant to your topic or question?

## **6. CURRENCY**

- Is the information on the page up-to-date?
- Can you tell when the page was last updated?
- Are there dead links?
- Is there a difference between the date the information was created and the date the page was last updated?

## **7. RESPONSIBILITY**

- Are the authors up-front about their purpose and content?
- Is there a way to contact the authors?
- Do the authors give credit for information used?
- Is there a reference list?

## **8. CLARITY**

- Is the information clearly presented?
- Is the text neat, legible and formatted for easy reading?
- If there are graphics, do they add to the content or distract?
- If there are advertisements, do they interfere with your ability to use the page?
- Are the pages well organized?
- Are there mistakes in spelling or word usage?

## **9. ACCESSIBILITY**

- Can you get in?
- Does the site load quickly?
- Can you move around the site easily?
- Is the site or page still there next time?
- Is there a text-only alternative for the visually impaired?